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**PREVENTING CHILD MALTREATMENT AND PROMOTING WELL-BEING**

April is Child Abuse Prevention Month  
From the Director of Public Health and Social Services

The month of April is nationally recognized as Child Abuse Prevention Month. This year's national theme is "**Strong and Thriving Families**". Throughout the month of April, child welfare agencies, faith based organizations and our military community will come together to raise awareness about child abuse and neglect.

Child abuse and neglect affects children of every age, race and income level. Child maltreatment is a traumatic experience, and the impact on children can be profound. Traumatic events can overwhelm children's ability to cope and elicit powerful physical and emotional responses.

In Fiscal Year 2018, Guam Child Protective Services (CPS) received a total of 1,364 referrals of child abuse and neglect involving a total number of 2,039 children who were suspected of being abused or neglected.

This year, the Department of Public Health and Social Services would like to highlight the importance of partnering with parents and caregivers. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, "Families are central to a child's safety and well-being and they need support. Their desire to do the best they can for their families provides a foundation for working with them to explore strategies for caring effectively for their children.

The benefits of partnerships are that it:

- Focuses attention on the overall well-being of the child and family, rather on specific "symptoms" of isolation.
- Results in more competent and relevant supports, as providers gain a greater understanding of families' perspectives, homes and environments.
- Foster parent leadership skills, resulting in more confident parenting and an enhanced ability of mothers, fathers and other caregivers to advocate for their family's needs.

- Promotes lasting change, as parents build on existing skills and enhance natural support networks that will extend beyond the time frame of a provider's involvement.

Working in partnership with parents and caregivers means:

- Understanding that all parents have strengths, and helping families build on their strengths and recognize their personal power to ensure family success.
- Viewing parents as the experts on their own children, supporting them with resources and sharing responsibility for outcomes.
- Listening carefully to parents' concerns and helping them identify solutions that will work for their family.
- Including parents in the development, implementation and evaluation of processes and programs that are driven by parents' needs and incorporate their ideas and suggestions.
- Helping parents take responsibility and learn to advocate more effectively for themselves and their children.
- Working to understand parents' language and culture, and adjusting communication to reflect differences.

Partnerships between parents or caregivers and the various community providers is a valuable prevention tool which can ultimately reduce the risk of child abuse and neglect in our community. This month and throughout the year, let's focus on preventive measures to support parents and create healthier communities for children.

Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact Linda Rodriguez, Human Services Program Administrator, Bureau of Social Services Administration at 475-2653/2672.

  
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